Understanding Theatre - Fall 2014

TH-110, Sections 12390 & 12392

COURSE DATES: 25 August through 13 December 2014

INSTRUCTOR: Allan Trautman allan.trautman@canyons.edu

100% ONLINE: All exams given over the Internet via Blackboard

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS: “Think Theatre” by Mira Felner; “Fuddy Meers” by David Lindsay-Abaire; “The Illusion” by Tony Kushner

Hello Theatre Students

Welcome! My name is Allan Trautman, and I'll be guiding you through Understanding Theatre. This letter should provide you with enough information about the class so that you can decide if you want to take this class online. Feel free to email me with any questions you still have after reading this letter.

View a two-minute video introduction.

Course overview and student learning outcome

Understanding Theatre will provide you with an overview of world theatre history and practice. We will analyze theatre and the theatrical event from the audience perspective, and your culminating activity will be to write critiques of two theatrical events you attend. Readings will cover aspects of production such as acting, directing, design, and playwriting, as they are practiced throughout the world. We will examine how theatre traditions have been created, as well as how they have been adapted, especially in our contemporary global community.

In this course, we will pursue some fundamental questions: What is theatre? Why and how do artists make theatre? Why and how do we attend and study theatre? How does theatre influence, shape, transform, and enrich our identities? How is theatre influential in the shaping of our culture, and how does our culture shape our theatre?

Is this online course right for you?

All of the work in this course occurs online. There are no face-to-face meetings. This online course will require the same time commitment as the face-to-face version but, when you
take an online class, the time of day that you complete your work is more flexible. You can 
log in at a time of day convenient to you. However, because there are weekly deadlines, this 
is not a class where you can complete work far ahead of your classmates or make up work 
during the last weeks of the term.

There will be occasional tests covering the text, you will write two play critiques, and submit 
frequent assignments. You will also be asked to create and facilitate your own weekly 
discussion board questions as well as respond to other’s posts. Additional activities I might 
include are a creative design project and small-group projects. (This will be finalized in the 
course syllabus, available at the start of class.)

*Any student who does not complete all of the major assignments and at least 80% of the message 
board assignments will fail the course.*

I expect students to sign on to Blackboard at least three to five times a week to retrieve and 
submit assignments and to participate in discussions, message board activities and email 
exchanges. If you will not be able to participate in this manner, *this is not the course for 
you.* You should not plan to sign in and work on the class only on the weekends.

Success in this course relies upon your commitment to do the coursework *independently.* If 
you prefer to have hands-on guidance and face-to-face interaction to enjoy and succeed in a 
class, you may want to take the classroom version, also available this semester from other 
instructors. To succeed and benefit from this course, you need to be *self-reliant, motivated, 
disciplined and focused.* This is not a “learn at your own pace” course; I require regular 
participation in online discussion board forums, and in individual and group activities. You 
may prefer to take the on-ground version of this course if you feel uncomfortable developing 
the following online discussion skills:

1. framing an issue on your own so it can be discussed, rather than drawing on a pre-
defined position
2. keeping an issue open for continued discussion (some students tend to look for the 
“final answer” very early in the discussion)
3. avoiding the tendency to create a set of parallel monologues on an issue rather than 
discussing it with each other in a forward-moving conversation

*VERY IMPORTANT:*

*Any student who fails to log in to the class website for more than five consecutive days at any time 
during the semester will be dropped from the class for non-attendance. (Discussion board posts and 
assignment submissions are considered attendance.)*
To take this course online, you need…

- Regular access to a computer, the internet, and your “my.canyons.edu” email address.
- Access Blackboard at this URL: http://bb9.canyons.edu
  
  **USERNAME:** 7 DIGIT STUDENT ID NUMBER  
  **PASSWORD:** “student” (unless you changed it previously)
  
  View some general student information about Blackboard
  
  For additional help, see the getting started tutorials

- Ready access to, and proficiency with, current word processing software, such as Microsoft *Word* or Apple *Pages*.
- You need to be able to save and open PDF files. To view PDF files, you should have a current version of the [free Adobe Acrobat Reader](http://get.adobe.com/reader) installed on your computer.
- You will need an up-to-date version of your internet browser (such as Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari or Chrome).
- You need to be computer literate and skilled in basic document creation and handling. At the very least, you should know how to cut and paste and copy from one document to another and how to attach documents to emails.
- Also, you should know how to set page margins in your word processing application, so that I can ensure fairness in determining whether your critiques meet minimum word and page requirements.

PLEASE do not attempt to complete this course using only your smart phone or tablet. While these may work for some activities, plan to have access to a computer. There are MANY computer labs on the COC campus, including in the TLC.

Course activities, or, what you can expect to be doing…

During the course of the semester, you will be engaged in four types of activities.

- **Student-lead Discussion Board Participation:** You will facilitate online discussions with your classmates for each weekly assignment. This consists of an original post by you in the form of a question about the reading material, plus replies to others’ comments in your thread, and replies to others’ questions in their threads.

- **Individual and Group Homework Assignments:** These are the weekly assignments you will complete as part of each weekly course module. This includes activities such as writing personal responses to course material, analyzing play structure, and analyzing a critique of a theatrical production.

- **Individual and Group Projects:** Projects generally take more than one week to complete. An example would be creating with your group a production design for a given play.
Play Critiques: You are required to attend two pre-approved theatrical performances by a college or professional company during the fall semester. (Ideally, you will choose to see the two College of the Canyons shows being produced this fall.) Community theatre performances will not be allowed. You will write one critique for each of the two productions. You can expect to pay about $7 for each of the on-campus productions; more if you choose to go off-campus. You will be required to scan or photograph a picture of both your TICKET and PROGRAM and submit this with your critique.

What you should do next…
If you have any remaining questions about this course, then email me at allan.trautman@canyons.edu.

Once you determine that this course is right for you, don't forget to actually register for the class!

Then, on August 25, sign on to Blackboard and click on this course in your list of My Courses. Look for Start Here in the menu on the left side of the screen. Read through this introductory module and be sure to complete the listed assignment by midnight Monday night, August 25. Your first regular module is available that day. You must absolutely sign in by the first day of the class and complete the activities within the “START HERE” folder, or you will be dropped from the class on Tuesday. And please purchase the Felner textbook before the class begins.

I look forward to working with you this semester, and truly hope you have fun as you begin the process of Understanding Theatre.

Best,

Allan Trautman